

Greetings Council President Glass, Council Vice President Friedson and other Councilmembers:

I'm Judith Clark, CEO and Founder of Women Who Care Ministries. A mission very near and very dear to our hearts is fighting to end child hunger. For more than 22 years we have provided critical safety net services, especially through our "*Helping Kids Eat Weekend Meal Program.*" During the height of the pandemic, we provided 7,000 weekend meals for kids each Friday, via the curbside grab-and-go model. When schools re-opened in 2021, we pivoted to our original model of direct service through Montgomery County Public Schools. Now, in FY23, each Friday we provide weekend meals at 41 MCPS to 2,500 students and we are slated to provide meals to at least 2,500 students in FY24 as well. As you know, malnutrition affects the cognitive and behavioral development of children, in addition to affecting their physical growth. Thus, this program is essential to the overall well-being of the children. Since these kids, who reside in food-insecure households receive the meals on Friday for weekend consumption; they return to school on Monday ready to learn and able to concentrate on their studies.

Sadly, for FY 2024, only **\$140,952.86** has been recommended to extend the term of our services from July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024. This amount is extremely insufficient as the FY24 cost to successfully feed 2,500 students for the 42-week school year is \$682,500.

Here's the cost breakdown: 2,500 students weekly x \$6.50 per weekend meal x 42 weeks of school in FY24 = **\$682,500**. \$140,952.86 was recommended. Hence, there is a **\$541,547** deficit.

[Side note: We were awarded **\$596K** in this FY23 year and we are struggling to continue meals through this June of 2023].

As always, we want to persevere - - to stick and stay, and remain in the fight to end child hunger, but unless additional funds are allocated for FY24, we will no longer be able to provide these critical weekend meals to these students in need, as we have successfully done for 22 years.

We've definitely got what it takes, not just to provide weekend meals but to continue incorporating the many strategies we have developed, to strategically address the root and underlying dynamics of hunger on a deeper level; thus helping to end child hunger. Yes, with the needed funding, matched with our tenacity and ingenuity – we will continue to play a significant role in sharing the County's vision of ending child hunger.

*Child Hunger – So Serious Yet So Solvable!*

Councilmembers, can we count on your support to help us continue to fight and ultimately end child hunger, one day, one precious kid at a time? We pray that you recommend an increase to our FY24 base budget to \$682,500, so we can continue to provide weekend meals to the valued kids in our program.

Thank you for your time.

*Judith Clark*

Judith Clark, CEO

Women Who Care Ministries